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Song of Etsu Bello

The name of Allah is the beginning of all learning.
Let us speak of the day when *Etsu* Bello bought a motor-car.
On the day when *Etsu* Bello bought a motor-car,
The whole of Bida went out to build a road.
Younger brother and elder brother, they went out to build the road.
All the people on the farms went out to build the road.
The young bride, she went to build the road.
The bridegroom, he went to build the road.
But why did they all go out to build the road?
It was because *Etsu* Bello had bought a motor-car.
Because of that all people went out to build a road.
They said: Let us build a road on which the car can travel.
Then the man who wants to go to Baddeggi, in this car he will go.
And Zungeru, the man who wants to go to Zungeru, in this car he will go.
And Wuya, who will travel to Wuya, in this car he will go.
The man who will go to Jima, in this car he will go.
The man who will go to Kacha, in this car he will go.
The man who will travel beyond the river, in this car he will go.
Thus he will go, they said, and therefore let us make the road.
Etsu Bello has the money to buy the car,
But the car will benefit all the people of Bida, from the farms and from the city,
The great man and the servant.
They thank *Etsu* Bello because he bought the car.
Etsu Bello, who has horses, and who now has a car,
Etsu Bello can say: Though the horse may break his legs,
We shall go all the same.
On the day when *Etsu* Bello bought the motor-car,
The bottles of the glass-makers turned into red beads.
And the kernels of the gombara grass became necklaces.[1]
In that year when *Etsu* Bello bought the motor-car,
The men were beating the ground,
And the woman, she was sitting at home.
How did it happen that the woman was sitting at home?
Of old it was the woman who was beating the ground,
And the man he just stood and watched.
But because of this motor-car of *Etsu* Bello,
All the men were beating the ground, and that is that.[2]
And all the people, the whole of Bida,
They were saying their thanks to *mace da ciki*.[3]
And all Bida was giving thanks to *karan giya*,[4]
Who has sold the car to *Etsu* Bello.

[1] i.e. all the people who went out to see the motor-car were dressed in their most beautiful dress, and the glass-makers of Bida were busy manufacturing ornaments for the occasion.

[2] By 'beating the ground' is meant the levelling of the ground in the road building. The same term is also used for the levelling of the floor in the Nupe huts, a work which is reserved for the women. Therefore this comment on the change of times.

[3] *Mace da ciki* (Hausa, pregnant woman), the rather irreverent nickname the Bida people had for the District Officer at that time.

[4] *Karan giya* (Hausa, a grass with prickles—*Pennisetum*), another nickname for the District Officer at that time.

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And all the people were giving thanks to *Etsu* Bello,
Because he gave his money to buy a motor-car,
That motor-car that will become a thing of benefit
To all the human beings.

In myth and religion the 'binding forces' of the kingdom gather themselves to fullest strength. The *Etsu* Nupe is not, as we have seen, the religious as well as the political leader of his people; unlike the village chief, he cannot even claim kinship links with the priests of his country. But Nupe kingship is linked in so many ways with religious usages and forms of ritual symbolism that they inevitably become instruments of political solidarity. Rites and beliefs are focused upon the person of the king. Appeals for the help of supernatural agencies become appeals to agencies more or less clearly symbolic of the political system. The welfare and continuity of the community, unthinkable without these supernatural safeguards, become unthinkable without the state.

Out of the weak and irregular uniformity of beliefs and rituals and out of disconnected local cults and traditions the kingdom thus creates a new religious community. One of the centres of this religious unification is that 'mythical charter' which made the dynasty of Nupe kings descendants of the mythical culture-hero, Tsoede. Relics of Tsoede, regalia, instruments of ordeal, magical emblems, which exist in every town of the Emirate, are the symbols of this ancient sacred pact. The name and tradition of Tsoede is also associated with cults which secure childbirth, fertility, and well-being, with certain rituals which prevent floods of the Niger, drive away disease, or bring punishment upon a criminal.[1] To take one example only. In Mokwa exists a certain ritual called *Tsoede* or *sara* (Hausa, lit. malicious accusation, and also snake bite; refers here to the use of the ritual as ordeal), which is practised as ordeal, or whenever trouble befalls the community. It is performed by the *Sheshi*, that 'king-maker' of whom we have heard before; he places the short 'chain of Tsoede', the insignia of his office, on the ground in the sacred grove, makes a sacrifice of beer and fowl, and speaks thus:

God, we have come.
God, everybody has come.
This ancient thing of Tsoede
Which is lying on the ground,
It says we should bring beer.
Because of the old saying which we have heard,
Because of that we bring beer and fowl.
Tsoede, make the whole town prosper [or whatever is the special aim of the invocation].

A powerful secret society, organized to combat witchcraft, the order of the *ndakó gboyá*, became a *kuti 'tsu*, a King's Cult, only half a century ago. There is no doubt that the *ndakó gboyá* cult itself existed long before that. But under *Etsu* Masaba the head of this order, the grandfather of

[1] This latter cult I have described in *Man*, 1935, 143. The association of Tsoede with the main fertility cult of Nupe, the *gunnu*, is discussed in *J.R.A.I.*, 1937, p. 118.

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leaves are allowed to fall off and rot on the ground—an efficient system of natural fertilization, though not, apparently (unlike the 'green manuring' practised in agriculture), applied consciously. 246

Kola-nut

We have had occasion already to speak of the Kusopa, the kola-nut planters in the forest groves of Laboži. The Kusopa of Laboži and the neighbouring districts devote the larger part of their agricultural work to the cultivation of the kola-nut tree, growing little else besides—only a little millet and sorghum. The method of kola-nut cultivation is interesting. The trees are planted at the beginning of the rains. They flower for the first time after five years, about July, and after six years bear fruit, towards the end of October. The fruit is picked in February. From every harvest a gourdful of nuts is kept to be used as seeds, for nearly every year new trees are planted to replace old and barren ones. When planting a new tree the seed is buried hand-deep in the ground. To protect the seed the place where it was planted is covered with twigs; moreover, four banana plants are planted around it, in a square, about 6 feet by 6 feet. As the banana grows faster than the kola-nut the four banana plants provide shade for the tender young tree, and at the same time secure the necessary distance between newly planted trees. When the kola-nut tree reaches a certain height and no longer needs the shade of the banana plants, the latter are dug out and removed. The tending of the young kola-nut tree involves constant weeding—in which no hoe is used; only the 'bush-knife', so as not to hurt the delicate plant—and much watering. During the dry season the seedlings must be watered every four days. The need for humid soil explains the fact that the kola thrives only in the most humid part of Nupe, in the thick forest groves of Kusopa country.

This environmental factor is fully understood by the people. The failure of kola-nut cultivation in other districts of the Emirate (on which we shall have more to say presently) is partly attributed to the less favourable soil. But the traditional monopoly of kola-nut planting in Laboži is not, in their eyes, fully explained on such empirical grounds. A legend that has grown up round the cultivation of the kola-nut tree which tells about the discovery, by a Laboži woman, of the secret of kola-nut planting, supplies another explanation more convincing to their way of thinking. Let me quote this legend in full.

A woman was threshing grain for beer when a Hausa from Borgu, on his way back to his country, happened to pass. He crossed the threshing-ground and put down the load he was carrying. The woman went into the house to fetch water and to cook porridge for the guest. She brought the food and gave it to the Hausa. He ate the porridge and liked it very much. He opened his load, took out two kola-nuts, and gave them to the woman to thank her for the food. At that time there were no kola-nuts anywhere in Nupe country. The woman took the kola-nuts and put them on the threshing-ground. Later, when she took the grain into the house, she forgot the kola-nuts and left them lying there on the threshing-ground. One day, when she came out to the threshing-ground again, she saw these kola-nuts. She said: 'Look, the nuts which the Hausa gave me have come 245 539

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up.' She went and told the men of the house. They all came and looked. They cleared the ground around the young plants; they had two kola-nut trees then. After three years the trees bore fruit. The men picked the fruits and took them home. They broke the nuts open and ate them. They picked out the kernel, took it into the bush and planted it. When the kola-nut trees bore fruit again the men picked the fruits and took them to the king. This was the beginning of the kola-nut in Nupe. When they had taken the fruits to the king, he said: 'They are very nice indeed.' But the following year the trees did not bear fruit. So the men went to see the soothsayers. They said that the trees would not bear fruit again unless they sacrificed a human being. So the men went and told the king, and said: 'If we do not sacrifice a human being our trees will never bear fruit again.' Therefore the king gave them permission to take a human being and sacrifice it. They did so, and the trees bore fruit again. This was the beginning of human sacrifices in Nupe, with the permission of the king.

As the legend explains the origin of kola plantation in the country of the Kusopa, certain magic rites which are practised by that group—and by that group only—emphasize the unique position of the kola-nut planters. Only with the knowledge of that special magic can the success of the difficult and precarious cultivation be assured. The Laboži people practise two kinds of this professional magic. At the time when the kola trees are in bloom every planter will collect the dead leaves on his plantation, place them in a mortar, and pound and then burn them on the plantation. There is no spell or special ritual linked with this act, but by it, as by a magic act, the planter believes he will ensure a rich harvest. The second magic connected with kola-nut planting is performed for the whole group by the *Majī Tsuba*, the Master of Threshing (in the legend the first kola-nuts were growing from the threshing-ground), the village priest of Laboži. Annually, about two months before the picking of the kola-nuts, he performs a sacrifice in front of the hut in which, as the legend has it, the woman lies buried to whom the Kusopa owe the knowledge of kola-nut planting. To-day a white ram and cock are sacrificed, the blood together with some beer is poured on the threshold of the hut, and *Sokó*, God, is invoked that he may let the kola trees thrive. Formerly this sacrifice is said to have demanded a human victim. (See p. 90, n. 2.)

This connexion between planting technique and mythical and magic ideas, common all the world over, needs no special explanation. But in the case of the kola-nut planters it gains an additional significance. The special nature of the rite, its infrequent occurrence, correspond to the special monopolized technique. In the eyes of the people who, not kola-nut planters themselves, accept the existence of these special rites, it confirms and endorses the exceptional position of the Kusopa as the masters of a unique craft. About fifteen years ago the Administration planned to introduce the cultivation of kola-nuts into the other districts of Nupe. A few expert planters from Laboži were sent round to teach the farmers in places where the soil looked promising the almost secret art of kola planting. These efforts met with but meagre success. Local conditions were to a large extent responsible: the soil in the other districts seemed capable of producing only the inferior kind of kola, and

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both on the same, profane, occasions.[1] More important, Nupe mythology is altogether flimsy and rudimentary. It illustrates only two tenets of the creed, the conception of a supreme deity and the role of 'medicine', while others, for example, the equally basic conception of 'ritual', are given no such expression. Nor does the mythology concern itself more than scantily with cosmological speculations or with the justification of particular ceremonies.

Certain legends meant to account for particular practices or ceremonials will be quoted later, in that context. Let me here illustrate my point by relating the one cosmological myth the Nupe possess. It is, strictly speaking, only 'near-cosmological', being concerned, not with the origin of the world and of all the things and creatures in it, but only with the origin of man, of the Nupe people, and of one observance (which is incorrectly stated). The myth, incidentally, may not be entirely a Nupe creation; the names of the first human beings mentioned in it have a Mohammedan flavour ;[2] and certain details of the narrative (the bull who appears out of the water, and his strange language) occur in almost the same form among the Bororó Fulani.[3] However this may be, the myth is far from well known, so that for this reason also it cannot be considered a relevant expression of the Nupe creed.

'In the beginning, there was a man called Ancestor Adă and a woman called Ancestress Adama. They had two children, one male, one female, who in turn begot two children, male and female. The male child died immediately after birth, while the girl stayed alive. When she grew up she spoke a strange language which her parents could not understand. But a bull who one day rose from the river when the girl was standing on the bank understood the language. He talked to the girl, and the two became friends. Later the bull became the girl's lover, and she bore him a male child. This child again spoke and understood the strange language. When the boy grew up, he used to go to the bank of the river to talk to the bull, until one day the bull climbed out of the river and followed the boy on dry land wherever he went. This boy was the ancestor of the "Cow Fulani", and the bull the first of the Fulani cattle.

'Ancestress Adama had a third child, a girl called Mureamu (Miriam or Mary), who had three children, two sons and a daughter. When they grew up the two young men both desired their sister. They quarrelled and one was killed. It was thus that

[1] The word in question is *etă*, meaning 'stories of old times', and these are told in daytime, not at night (as are stories meant for amusement), when people would be 'too tired to listen to serious things'.

[2] See below, p. 247.

[3] See F. W. de St. Croix, *The Fulani of Northern Nigeria*, p. 8.

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death and murder first appeared in the world. The couple who remained did not know what to do with the dead body. They carried the corpse on their shoulders for three days, lamenting and crying, but could not get rid of it. At last, God caused the earth to open, and they placed the body inside. Thus the practice of burial and of the three days' mourning for the dead began.[1] The couple now stayed together and begot a male child, who became the ancestor of the Nupe people.'

If, then, Nupe mythology is a very inadequate guide to dogma and doctrine, this inadequacy is itself significant, revealing the Nupe attitude towards their creed and indeed the whole tenor of their religious thought in their true perspective. Mythology, as we have said, illustrates and exemplifies rather than enunciates the creed. We may go further and say that it expresses the creed in a form less abstract and theoretical than does formulated doctrine. For myths borrow the phraseology of realistic accounts, dealing as they do with near-humans and near-natural events; thus they make less demand upon sheer credence, compromise with ordinary imagination, and as it were vulgarize the dogma. If, then, primitive religions rely on mythical narratives rather than on dogmatic assertions they seem to discard the more abstract contents of religious thought. Yet Nupe religion, which does not employ mythology either to any great extent, is clearly not of this kind. If the Nupe do not attempt a specific, coherent formulation of their creed, neither do they seek to re-phrase it in more concrete and would-be realistic language. In other words, Nupe religion forgoes the means of 'vulgarizing' the dogma. Thus, though its creed may be inarticulate, yet it is held in all abstractness.

3. CATEGORIES

(i) *God and the World*

The most basic concept of Nupe theology, that of the supreme being, is also the widest. In a sense it stands for the whole realm of religion, serving to separate all things that belong to that realm from others that do not. For in order to express this distinction the Nupe say of an object, phenomenon, or type of action that it is, or is not, *nyá Sokó*—'of God' or 'belonging to God'. There are two inaccuracies in this broad category of things religious. The clause 'of God' in the sense here understood is properly applied only in the context of discussions turning upon the dichotomy of the religious and profane. In a wider context the phrase loses its disjunctive implication; for ultimately everything is 'of God', that

[1] There is no such rule of 'three days' mourning'.

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founder of Nupe kingdom and serving the interests of the state. We shall later deal with these 'exceptions'. Let me here stress that in calling them that I am taking my lead from the people. Indeed, the Nupe would altogether disregard these lapses from a wholly abstract creed, which seems to require no effigies or visible symbols; for when comparing their religion with that of other peoples, the Nupe will always emphasize that they have no sacred emblems, idols, masks, or 'little likenesses' (*zazagíži*).

It is perhaps not surprising that so abstract a conception as that of *kuti* should not be held with equal clarity by everyone. In particular, I met with two as it were heterodox notions; one was the idea that *kuti* represents a part of *Sokó*, or a *Sokó tetengi*, a 'Little God' (which, in Nupe language, is a contradiction in terms); according to the other, God was 'up above', but *kuti* was somehow of the earth, being a 'thing' buried in the ground, very likely in the places of ritual. These notions were always put tentatively, and were moreover voiced by individuals who could not claim the fullest knowledge available in the society, that is, by younger men or by Nupe under the influence of Islam; the older men, and especially the priests of *kuti*, declared such views to be false. But supernatural power understood more concretely and associated with specific material objects also has a place in the Nupe universe. This notion is embodied in the third tenet of the religion, which concerns the existence of *cigbe* or 'medicine'.

(iii) *Medicine*

Let me say, first of all, that 'medicine' is the literal translation of the vernacular term, which is applied not only to 'magic' substances but also to medicinal herbs or drugs of any kind, native as well as European, whose properties are assessed essentially empirically. Of the relation between the two we shall speak in a later context. Here we must note that the Nupe inventory of the 'things in the world' does not mention 'medicine', although in some respects it is an exact counterpart to *kuti*, that is, an agency meant to aid man in a universe governed by an all-too-distant deity. But unlike *kuti*, 'medicine' is not thought of as being part of the creation and a primordial gift of God. If it now exists in the world, it does so because of man's own endeavours. There is a legend, well known throughout the country, expounding this view.

'There was a certain younger brother, called Kpara, whose elder brother was Tswasha Malu. They lived in the time of *Etsu* (king) Shagó.[1] There existed a certain medicine, called *cekpyeca shina*

[1] The two brothers are mentioned in no other myth. The name of the king, Shagó, occurs also in the myth describing the origin of the

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779 *shina buburukun* (meaningless words). On the day when the two
773 brothers were making this medicine, Kpara wished to climb up
539 into the sky. Kpara explained to the king that he needed a chain. The king summoned the blacksmiths of the whole country and they forged a chain of seven links. Then Kpara tied the chain round his waist and went straight up, higher and higher, until he reached the sky. It took him three years to travel up to the sky, and people thought they would never see him again. At the end of the three years people beheld the chain dropping slowly down to earth, and 19 days later, Kpara himself dropped from the sky, sitting down, bang, on top of the chain. The people asked—Had he seen God? Kpara answered (this part is sung):

God is far away,
God is far away,
But medicines are applied on earth.

"The person who tries to eat porridge while shouting at the same time will get nothing into his stomach" (i.e. one must not attempt the impossible). Kpara then said to all the people that they must try and make medicine of ingredients. "For God is not watching man." This Kpara was the elder brother of the father who begot us—our tribe, that is.'

779 This legend or myth introduces two crucial features into Nupe doctrine. One is the assertion that 'God is not watching man', or literally, *Soko nw' á yelé à*, 'God is not seeing'; the other is the notion that that powerful agency, *cigbe*, has been produced or discovered by man's own initiative. The two clearly hang together, both following logically from the root concept of the supreme being. The assertion that God 'is not watching' only expands and sharpens that other idea, that God, though creative and omnipotent, 'is far away'—too far away to follow closely his handiwork, and too impersonal to concern himself closely with all that happens on earth. And it is this extreme aloofness of the deity which justifies the further notion of human self-help. God, as we know, cannot be reached by prayers and invocations alone. Thus there have to be intermediaries, of which *kuti* is one and *cigbe* the other. But there is this difference. Only the *kuti* is 'of God'; equally, it provides only for the collective and unvarying needs of a people, not for the more variable and particular troubles of individuals. As regards these, God seems even more remote; for he has not thought of giving man the appropriate aids: rather, they had to be discovered by man left to himself. Here, then, we have

anti-witchcraft cult *ndakó gboyá* (see below, p. 173). Shagó is probably identical with the mythical hero and deity of Yoruba religion, Shangó, who, in Yoruba mythology, is described as a man or king of Nupe.

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'mamari', the 'greeting' of the *mamma* masks. Later the masks, accompanied by all the young men, set out on a dance-procession through the village, where they beat with their sticks on the doors of houses, to frighten all evil persons (and all women). On the way they 'salute' the houses of chief and elders and also look out for strangers who might have strayed into the village. The dance procession is repeated several times, and on every return the masks join in the singing and dancing, which become more and more general. Let me stress that the dance preserves its restrained and quiet character throughout, the occasional shrieks notwithstanding. Altogether, the general mood is neither excited nor severe. The men who stay behind at the *cigbe* shrine, if they do not dance, talk in whispers but quite informally, about previous performances of the *kuti*, about old times, and so forth; one of the elders takes the opportunity of telling me about the meaning and rules of the *mamma*. Some time during the dance the meal has been prepared and is eaten by the congregation after some morsels of food are dropped into the *cigbe* vessel. It is by then 11 o'clock. There is no washing of hands, and no other formal conclusion of the sacrifice. Singing and dancing, and the drinking of beer while it lasts, go on in the same manner until dawn, though some old men, tired out, have fallen asleep. In the morning, the men return to their houses to sleep, while the womenfolk, now released from the night's prohibition, set about their day's work. Formerly, I was told, this went on for a whole week, with dancing at night and rest during the day.

The songs sung during the *mamma* refer, on the whole vaguely and obscurely, to the ceremonial and its rules, though the text is interspersed with meaningless words.

1

The person who offends the *mamma*,
He (the *mamma*) will hear it and tell it
(i.e. the person will be punished with death).

2

The *mamma* instructs the masks;
it is closed to the uninitiated.

3

The masks, *woro woro*,
The masks kill (evil) people,
Eyeh——

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4

Arato, one makes the *mamma*,
Arato, the drum of *mamma* (is playing).
By night, the drum of *mamma* is speaking.

5

They are making the *mamma* with it together,
They are making the *mamma* with it together
('it' refers to the *kuti*, the phrase meaning—
in the ceremonial masks and *kuti* are one).

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The people have no theory why the cult should be particularly frightening to the women; on the contrary, they emphasize that the *mamma* is meant to frighten all evil doers and deny that it has any bearing on witchcraft (which is wielded essentially by women). Yet the cult is clearly the men's secret and seems to express male dominance and some antagonism between the sexes. Oddly enough, one of the ritual paraphernalia, the smallpox medicine, is described as a woman's gift. But let me leave this point for the moment and only point out that the *mamma*, which cleanses the community from evil influences, fittingly initiates the cycle of rites meant to procure more positive benefits—timely floods, as in the *ndáduma*, or health and fertility, as in the *dzakó*.

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The latter ritual is supposed to succeed the *mamma* by ten days, though the performance I witnessed took place seventeen days later, on 3rd December. The *dzakó* is performed in public, without secrecy, in front of the sacred relics of Tsoede, two bronze figures of a man and a woman. Special musical instruments are used, two gourd rattles, and three drums hung with brass bells and other ornaments again attributed to Tsoede. The congregation during the sacrifice itself consists of the thirteen elders of Jebba, as usual bareheaded and stripped to the waist, and carrying long staves; but other men and women, even children, may watch and will later join in the dance. The officiant of the ritual is the *Ndace* (the 'Father of Hunting'), though the ritual has nothing to do with hunting. Nor has the rank itself this particular connotation. In Jebba, it is an elder's rank among others, though one specifically connected with the relics of Tsoede; for the *Ndace* is one of the four men who serve (or used to serve) as the 'executioners' wielding the Chain of Tsoede.

[534]

The ceremonial starts in the afternoon, with a sacrifice in front of the bronze figures, during which the officiant has the two rattle players on his right and left. The place on the priest's left, opposite the female figure, signifies 'birth', the place on his right, opposite the male figure, 'health'; which symbolism of right and left is

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the servants, as though listening to the mask and translating its wishes, would order the drummers to change the rhythm; or the mask, silent until then, would stop and talk some gibberish in a falsetto voice, which meant another 'message' or salute, duly translated by the interpreters. Or finally, the mask would set out on a sudden excursion, breaking through the circle, run down a side-street and temporarily disappear.

The mood of the gathering grew more and more excited until, about noon, just when it seemed that the excitement would reach fever pitch, there was a sudden hush. The drumming paused, as did the dancing and singing. The mask stood still, flanked by the 'servants', and a number of old women walked up to it and, on their knees, with bent head, saluted the mask. They handed small gifts of money to the 'servants', which were meant to buy the 'protection of the *ndakó gboyá*'. (This, I was told, was only a token payment: formerly heavy sums were paid in the same fashion.) Soon afterwards the mask disappeared, now without returning, and the pause turned into a midday break, when everyone went home. At about 3 o'clock the mask reappeared on the market place, which soon filled with people, and the proceedings of the morning were resumed. The drumming and dancing went on into the night, to the light of torches and hurricane lamps, uninterrupted even by a gathering thunderstorm. At about 9 o'clock the mask danced out of the circle and disappeared in the dark, not to return. 'You see', a bystander pointed out, 'how it is swallowed up by the ground'.

The crowd of onlookers included not only every soul in Kutigi, among them all the local notables and the Fulani District Head (a 'royal prince' from Bida), the contingent from Shebe, but also many strangers who had learned of the forthcoming performance. The attitude of the crowd was an odd mixture of enjoyment and fear. Of the former there could be no doubt; for a long time afterwards people were talking about the 'nice' and 'beautiful' performance as though they were commenting on an ordinary festivity, and the 'servants' of the mask several times pressed me to say whether the *'ndakó gboyá* had pleased me'. But there was no question either of the fear. It was clearly voiced already in the women's songs; for unlike many ceremonial songs of Nupe, those sung at the *ndakó gboyá* are far from nondescript or ambiguous.

(1)

One does not call him friend
When he comes to stay in the bush:
A friend (he) is when he leaves.

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(2)

We are saying—'A stranger has come (in the night)'
He is greater than the chief.
We are saying—'being greater than the chief,
May he go away when day comes.'

(3)

We are desiring the cloth (mask)
Which covers the Great One.
God is in front,
He is in the back (i.e. being everywhere and all-powerful, God will protect us).

The attitude towards the *ndakó gboyá* could not be better expressed: he is a 'friend' only when he leaves, a powerful 'stranger' whom one wishes to see gone; and while one must invoke the secret of the 'cloth', it is yet so terrifying that the thought of God alone gives comfort. But let me stress that this is not merely the unthinking expression of conventional sentiments; the fear and awe referred to in the songs were clearly visible even in this ceremonial, devoid though it was of the more sinister implications of witch-hunting and punishment. When the old women presented their gifts of a few pennies to the mask, they were acting genuinely and in all humbleness; and any person whom the mask approached, man or woman, was as genuinely terrified. Men whom I knew to be sophisticated and 'enlightened', such as the local dispenser and one of my servants, ran and hid behind a hedge when the mask suddenly towered over them.

Nor can there be any doubt but that the people believe in the magic effects of the ceremonial. Even after the mild version I happened to see I heard the remark that the village was now clear of witchcraft. This attitude does not really conflict with the well-known extortions practised by the *ndakó gboyá* society; the admission of the abuses is one thing, and the belief in the anti-witchcraft cult quite another. Thus the Government's ban of the *ndakó gboyá* was thought regrettable if indeed not disastrous; everywhere the people spoke with envy of their cousins in Patigi who had kept their *ndakó gboyá* and hence preserved 'the only sure protection against witchcraft'. Often have I been told that in the rest of Nupe there was now no means of fighting witches, and no protection 'save God', who, as we know, is inscrutable, idle, 'far away'.

To be sure, even the *ndakó gboyá* is not a full protection. Though it may frighten witches and temporarily 'cleanse' a community, it cannot exterminate witchcraft. For not only must the cere-